

StreamBox

>> Time for the presentation to begin.

We will be muting all callers except for the presenters, but as Greg just shared, please take the time to mute yourself on your own phone line. First, I want to go over how to ask a question. We're going to be using the Q&A function in WebEx and we will be answering questions at the end of this presentation. So please enter your questions as we go along. If you're on a computer, you can click the Q&A function and enter your question in the text box. If you're on a mobile phone, you can click the dot, dot, dot button and the question mark button to enter your question.

Also, we will be recording this presentation in case you have to unexpectedly log off or would like to go back to revisit the information shared.

We'll be posting the recording to the health and human services website after we concluded all of our calls. Now, let's begin the meeting. I'd like to introduce Susan Gale Perry the chief deputy secretary at the North Carolina health and human services. Susan.

>> Katie, good morning, everyone. It's great to be with you today. And I want to thank you all for taking the time to be on this important call that I hope will provide you with a lot of answers to your questions about where we are going with our childcare guidance, what we've issued so far and what we're able to offer.

I am joined today by Kristi Snuggs the interim director at North Carolina division of child development and early education and as you heard Katie Test Davis the moderator for this call. We're going to be doing questions and answers at the end of the presentation.

And I do encourage you to ask your questions along the way as we go through the sections. However, I do encourage you to wait to ask all of your questions until we walk through the presentation because I do believe many of them will get answered throughout the course of the presentation.

I want to start by just thanking you again profoundly for the work that you do every day for children and families and for our state's economy and prosperity and well-being for our future. And I think this crisis has really shown us just how critical the childcare infrastructure is to our state. We know that childcare is essential right now for some of our other essential workers just like childcare who need to be out in the workforce doing the things that they're doing to protect the health and safety of our communities. So we appreciate you. And we are going to do everything we can to support you both now and as we move through this crisis. And I also want to thank you in advance for hanging in there with us as guidance changes. We're getting new information and new directives and guidance all the time, both from our state leadership and at the federal level we want to keep you fully up to date on all the new guidance that's coming out. So we will at times have to make some changes. You will hear that already in this presentation. And that may happen again.

But we will do our absolute best to keep you fully informed and keep things as clear and unconfusing as we possibly can.

So what I want to go over right now is the agenda for today. We're going to start with an overview of our overall COVID-19 state response.

And I'm going to talk a little bit about where are we beyond just what we're at as a state and

what can things look like and what can you expect. And then I'll turn it over to Kristi Snuggs to talk about the emergency childcare guidance that we issued and in the process of issuing and get really specific about what you need to do right now if you haven't already and what you'll need to do next. We'll give you resources and support and then we'll move into the moderated questions and answers where I'll try to call questions and get the most frequently answered questions up so that everybody can see them and get answers to them live today on the call. So where are we right now as a state? I think many of you are -- I know, tuning into the press conferences and briefings that are being issued here in the state and nationally. We are in a worldwide pandemic with COVID-19. It is very serious and it is very serious for our state. And that is why we are taking some of the kinds of unprecedented actions that we've taken before. We know right now that we have 1500 cases almost. We've had eight deaths. 23,000 and counting tests completed. And there are 157 folks who are in the hospital.

And that number is quite frankly rapidly rising every day. We have a lot of work to do to continue to mitigate the spread. That's what it's all about right now is doing everything we can individually and collectively to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

If you've tuned into national leaders or secretary Cohen or the governor you've heard them say that our greatest weapon right now is what we do the choices that we make around social distancing, around good, just health and safety practices, and obviously there are some folks who are not going to be able to practice social distancing at all times, and that's certainly true of childcare, which is why we've put out the kind of health and safety guidance that we've put out similarly for healthcare, for our foodservice workers, who are in grocery stores and there are a myriad of other professions that are essential right now to keep our communities healthy, our first responders and our emergency workers among others.

We've got a lot to cover today. So I'll move quickly through some of the updates. I think everyone is now well aware that governor Cooper on Friday issued a stay-at-home order in which he outlined essential businesses and operations which included childcare and significant list of other businesses that are included essential.

This is unlike many disasters in that it's not a hurricane. It's not a situation in an isolated part of our state.

It's state and nationwide, and so the list of essential businesses is fairly lengthy. It's in Executive Order 121.

We'll make sure you have a link to that executive order it's on our website COVID-19 section of our website. And we're going to talk about how the stay-at-home order which went into effect yesterday, Monday at 5:00 p.m., how that impacts some of the ways our guidance has changed. So you'll notice a shift in terminology from critical workers to essential workers. We now have an executive order that defines essential workers. So those are the folks we're going to be talking about today and there are some other things that have shifted as well. The order banned mass gatherings of 10 plus people. Want to be clear here that the order banning mass gatherings of 10 plus people does not apply to childcare programs because it is defined as an essential business or your classroom. So this does not mean the childcare programs need to be shifting to group sizes of no larger than 10.

We are encouraging folks to keep their group sizes as small as they can relative to the children that they have enrolled in the program and not bring groups of children together in large

settings.

We've also ordered all K-12 public schools to close as I'm sure you're well aware through May 15th and there's been a number of other things that have really limited access to many of the services and kinds of conveniences that we're used to and that make us feel good every day because it's a hard time for everybody.

We have over all the state seen an uptick in mental health crises.

So just be thoughtful of that. Be kind to yourselves and kind to each other and know that this is hard on everybody and all of us personally. It's scary and we're all trying to do what we need to do to take care of ourselves and our families and our communities. But it is having an impact on everybody. With that, I really want to talk about the high-risk populations, as you're all making decisions about whether you are in the childcare business right now or you're not, whether you're going to operate your program; whether you're going to be working in a program. Here's what the Centers for Disease Control identifies as high-risk populations. People 65 years and older. I'm going to read them.

People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.

People with high-risk conditions, including chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma or heart disease with complications.

People who are immuno compromised or obesity or certain underlying medical conditions such as diabetes. Also guidance that pregnant women should be carefully monitored and there is now some emerging evidence that infants may be at higher risk. That is not clear yet at this time.

But want you all to be aware of that and thoughtful about the decisions you're making for yourself and that your employees are making for themselves.

Everybody has to take care of themselves right now and do what they need to do.

So we recognize that.

We also know that some of you are trying to make the choice to stay open and serve the employees of other essential businesses.

And we are grateful for that, and we do need some programs to be able to do that. And that is why we have issued very significant health and safety guidance that we're asking you to make sure you can adhere to if you are going to be open to protect yourselves, protect your colleagues and protect the children and families in your care.

And Kristi will go over this later but I want to say that we'll be setting up a separate set of webinars just like these to go over the health and safety guidance with our child healthcare consultants and you can ask all of your health and safety questions with public health folks on that call so you can really talk through any of your health concerns.

Also want to speak just for a moment on our overall childcare strategy. So, it's very important to understand that we are dealing with the moment right now.

And our goal right now is to protect the health and safety of families, children and childcare staff that are remaining open and do need to use childcare.

We also want to make sure we're prioritizing connecting essential personnel to available childcare options. The secretary and the governor and others have been directing all nonessential workers to stay at home with their children.

At this particular time childcare is not operating in the usual way. This is emergency childcare

designed for the employees of essential businesses as defined in Executive Order 121 and it is the responsibility of families to self-identify and to monitor themselves and take responsibility for not bringing their children to childcare if they're not in an essential business.

We're also trying to take some financial steps to stabilize childcare programs that are open for essential workers right now. And Kristi is going to talk at length about some of those things. And I do want to just say that, folks, we are well aware that the financial steps we're taking right now are not going to address all of the financial needs of the childcare business.

We understand that childcare businesses like many other businesses in our state, this is an absolute crisis. This is going to be devastating for childcare businesses and we're going to be working very, very hard on other financial packages and strategies and both looking at the federal dollars that are coming available, potential state resources and all the resources at our disposal that we can collectively advocate for to alternately help the childcare industry move out of this time and move into recovery and be able to recover fully. We're well aware that there's a very great need and we'll be working hard side by side with you to try to address that need. So, with that I want to turn it over to Kristi Snuggs, who is really going to walk you through all of the childcare pieces. Kristi, I'm turning the wand over to you.

>> Thank you, Susan.

Good morning, everyone.

My name is Kristi Snuggs I've been introduced I'm the interim director for the division of child development and early education. And I too want to thank you all for the work that you do with families and children each and every day. And especially during this time of crisis where you are taking the steps to help us provide essential childcare for those critical workers in our community.

So I'm going to take some time to really delve into the emergency childcare guidance that we have been issuing to talk about the application process and then to connect you with some of the resources that are available. And to make sure that you know where to find this information. So the first slide that I want to speak to is this slide that really just gives a list of all of the childcare guidance that we have sent out to date.

You'll see on the slide that way back on March 17th, and I say way back because it feels like it's been forever, we issued payment guidance for March. This is payment guidance for in pre-K and subsidy just for the month of March. We followed up the very next day with guidance around regulatory flexibilities. And then on the 23rd we actually sent this out earlier but we updated the health and safety guidance from the 23rd.

This piece of guidance is one of the most important documents that we have sent out because what it does is it is guidance to help us minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for your staff, your colleagues and the families and children that you serve.

We also sent door signs for your facilities so that you could put those on the door to alert people that are coming into your center about some of the health guidance that is being issued. And also for you to think about how you might limit the number of visitors into your centers. Then on March 26th, we provided the emergency childcare operation and financing guidance. This was a large piece of guidance and included in that guidance was the emergency childcare application. And we're going to talk more in depth about that application in just a few minutes. Many of you have already completed the application. We already have over 3500 providers that

have completed the emergency application and we'll talk more about that in just a moment. And then also in that guidance was information around some of the financing initiatives that we will speak to in a few moments. The one other piece of guidance that has been sent out is around the COVID-19 childcare provider survey. This is a survey we're asking you to complete to give us updated information around your attendance, vacancies and staffing.

As Susan has already stated, first and foremost we are emphasizing that parents and caregivers should keep their children at home with them to the greatest extent possible to minimize the spread of this disease.

However, we do recognize that some essential workers, including yourselves, must go to work and cannot keep their children at home with them. So one of the resources that we have set up is a childcare hotline. This hotline is a 1-800 number that is open weekdays from eight to five and it is staffed by our childcare resource and referral agencies across the state who are helping parents and families find care for their children. Care that is needed for essential workers who are going into our communities and protecting us during this time of crisis.

We're also serving children homeless or families that have children who are homeless. Any children that are receiving welfare services or who live in unstable or unsafe living conditions. Care options are available for children from infants through age 12.

We encourage you to refer families to this hotline if they need help or for you to provide that assistance if needed.

So let's talk specifically about the COVID-19 emergency childcare application.

We released this early last week. And I would like to provide a few more details about what this application entails and what you need to do if you would like to continue to operate.

We are asking that all currently open providers, or if you closed and would like to reopen on April 1st to complete the COVID-19 emergency childcare provider application by 11:59 p.m. tonight, March 31st. Again, if you would like to open, reopen, if you've closed and would like to reopen tomorrow, April 1st, or if you're currently open and would like to continue to operate, we ask that you complete this application by 11:59 today.

Now, let's say you're not quite ready to open your facility back up.

Maybe you closed due to a decision that you've made but maybe you would consider reopening a little later. That is fine. But if you should make that decision, we would ask you to or we need you to complete this application so that we're aware that you are open and we ask that you give us at least two business days before the time that you would like to reopen. So that you can receive proper approvals and also that we could follow up to answer any questions that you might have.

Please note that if you need help finding this application, it is available on the DHHS website. But if you have questions or have trouble finding it, your childcare provider, excuse me, your childcare consultant is available to help and assist you. And if you've already applied using the application, you should be receiving a call from your childcare provider to answer any questions you may have. So let's delve a little deeper into the actual document, the application, and discuss what expectations we have for providers.

First and foremost, we expect providers to adhere to the updated interim COVID-19 guidelines for health, training and safety and also to comply with any of the interim policy and regulatory flexibilities that we've set forward.

We will be, as Susan has previously mentioned, conducting a separate series of webinars in the next couple of days.

So please be on the lookout for a notification, with the childcare health consultant, to review more in depth the health screening and safety guidance for you so that you can feel safe and comfortable in providing emergency care for these essential workers during this time.

Next, we are asking that you confirm that you have adequate staffing to comply with the licensing requirements in any of the updated guidelines that we've just mentioned that you are confirming that you have is staffing that needs to take place to have a safe environment for the children and families that you're serving. In addition, we would ask that you confirm that you have adequate supplies, resources and as I've already mentioned staff to meet the updated health guidelines and to care for children appropriately. When we talk about resources, we're talking about things that you have on hand so that you can properly conduct daily health checks; that you have enough soap and water for proper handwashing. You have enough disinfectants to clean your facility properly and basic things like food, milk and diapers and wipes and all this is available and you'll be able to serve children through this time.

We're also asking emergency childcare providers, those who completed the application and are approved to operate, we're asking you to use this simple online COVID-19 childcare provider survey. This is where we are asking you to record attendance, vacancies and staffing. The good thing about this survey is the first time you go in you have to fill in your license number and basic information but every other day that you go in that information is stored and the other days, each following day, you would only need to update any changes.

This information is vitally important to us.

This is the information that we are giving to the childcare hotline to the resource and referral network so that they're able to make appropriate referrals and to know where vacancies are across the state. So when families are calling in, they can refer families to your facilities so that you will be able to help those families that need childcare at this present time.

We're also asking our emergency childcare providers to the greatest extent possible to really care and make those temporarily vacant slots available to children of essential workers. Children who are homeless or in unstable or unsafe living arrangements. Or children who are receiving child welfare services.

Please note that we are not requiring you to enroll new children.

But we are encouraging you to do so to ensure that our essential workers can access childcare.

We understand and we realize that many families and many childcare providers are experiencing financial difficulties during this time. We have developed some financial incentives for both childcare providers and families. And we realize that this is not enough to save our whole industry but we do believe that it's a good starting point to help families and to help providers during this time of crisis.

First, if a family needs help with childcare we want you to be aware that there are funds for emergency childcare.

And I will speak to that a little more in the coming slides. But we are in the process of creating a COVID-19 parent application for financial assistance for emergency childcare.

Our hope is to have that completed and get that out to you in the next day or so.

Secondly, we are -- to assist parents we're asking the childcare providers waive the parent co-

pays for the months of April and May for any children that are on the subsidized childcare programs. The state will be picking up these co-pays. You will still receive the money, but we are asking that you not charge the parent for the co-pays.

And finally, we want to support our staff. We understand the extra effort that all of you are making to help keep essential workers' children during this time. And therefore we're asking providers to pay bonus payments to their teachers and their staff who are on site and working to assist in the care of children for essential workers.

So, I've just covered the main concept, the main elements of the COVID-19 emergency childcare application.

And you may ask what if I need help in completing it? And where is it located?

Where can I find this application? Again, the application is located here on our Web page.

And if you have questions or if there are concerns about some of the elements that I've just gone through, please reach out to your childcare consultant and ask those questions. We also want to make sure we help you in attaining or maintaining the resources that are required for you to stay open. And in order to do that, we are working with our local smart start partnerships across the state. And if you have need of resources or needs and there are things that you need help finding, please reach out to your smart start partnership and they are going to be ready and willing to help you troubleshoot and find the resources that you need.

Now I want to cover and address some of the financial assistance that we're providing for childcare providers if you decide to stay open.

Like many industries, we want to support our childcare industry who may be struggling during this time of crisis. As a way to support the facilities that are staying open, DHHS will pay subsidy payments for April and May. And we will make sure that you are held harmless for any lower attendance in the months of April and May by making sure that you are paid fully for these months. We are going back to your last full service month, which is February, and you will be made whole and held harmless for those lower attendance or enrollment of those children if they're attending, you will be held harmless for those months. We will pay you based on your attendance for the month of February. At this time, we are only making subsidy payments to providers who are open and serving children during the months of April and May.

In addition to making subsidy payments, we are also paying bonus pay and we're asking that you work with us to make sure that all of your childcare employees that are working on site at the facilities, that they receive bonus payments. Full-time employees will receive \$300 per month per teacher. \$200 per month for all other staff. If the employees are present and they work at least ten days during the month. But we also are providing bonus payments for part-time employees. Part-time employees are defined as employees who are working 20 hours or less. And their bonus payments are \$150 a month for teachers and \$100 a month for your other staff.

Please be aware that bonus payments will be subject to payroll taxes. In addition to the subsidy payments and bonus payments that we're making to providers, we will also be making NC pre-K payments. We will pay you fully for the remainder of the program year regardless of the site location or if the program is opened or closed.

Please be aware that we are working on additional guidance for providers so that they will know how to document appropriately the remainder of the months of the school year. NC pre-K

contractors will also be paid your full program coordination and administrative rates and we will again send out more specific program guidance to support you in making sure that you're submitting your FSRs correctly.

In addition, we will also be offering a new program. It is called the essential worker emergency childcare subsidy program. This program was established to really entice providers to work with these essential families, these essential workers who have children and have no other childcare options available.

Programs that begin April 1st, this program will begin April 1st and for anyone who is approved and operating as of April 1st, you can access -- you can be available to parents and offer this emergency childcare subsidy program.

Families, this is available for families who need financial assistance in paying for childcare. You see on the slide that families must meet three criteria for the Department of Health and Human Services to cover the cost of the care. Their gross income must be below 300% of the poverty level and parents and caregivers must be critical workers and they are working to respond to the COVID-19 and parents and caregivers must have no other childcare options available. If you accept these children, the rates that we will reimburse you are listed here on the screen.

Again, this program is designed for families who need assistance, who need financial assistance for childcare while they are working in our communities to address this COVID-19 crisis.

Providers who provide childcare for children receiving the emergency childcare subsidy during the COVID-19 pandemic will be paid based on the enrollment of the child unless the child is absent for more than ten days in a service month. If they're absent for more than ten days, their payment will be prorated accordingly.

I mentioned earlier that there is a parent application that is being finalized. This parent application is for those families who are interested in participating in the emergency childcare subsidy program. We are in the final steps of completing this application and it will be coming soon, with guidance as to what you need to do once the application, once the parent brings this application. I just went through the criteria that the parent is in need of childcare, they have no other childcare, that they are in need of financial assistance for the childcare and that they are below the 300% poverty level and they're an essential workers. Those are the parents that will need to fill out this parent application. We will ask the parents complete the form. It will be available on line. They can fill it out, print it, bring it to you.

But when you receive it, we are asking that you keep that form and that you will then track attendance for these children. Additional guidance with all of this information and a link to the parent application will be coming soon. So please be on the lookout for it. There will be no parent co- fees related to this emergency childcare subsidy. So what do you need to know right now? A couple of things. We've talked about the guidance that we've issued. Please make sure you know where it is if you need to refer back to it, please do so.

Please be on the lookout for additional guidance that will be coming. We also ask that if you wish to stay open beginning April 1st, that you complete the application form, the emergency childcare application form, by March 31st. If you are closed and would like to reopen effective April 1st you also need to complete the emergency child application form by 11:59 p.m. on March 31st.

If you wish to reopen after April 1st because you're just not quite ready today, then you can do

so. If the need arises, if you decide later in the month of April and May you would like to open your center back up, all we ask you to do is at that point complete the emergency childcare application.

At least two days in advance of the date that you would like to open so that we will have time to properly approve and carry out the paperwork and also reach out to you to make sure we answer any remaining questions that you may have.

If you do not wish to remain open during the COVID-19 crisis, your facility will be considered closed effective April 1st and at this point in time there is nothing else for you to do. What can you expect in the next few days? I've mentioned several times this morning that be on the lookout for additional operational guidance around the new subsidy program and the parent application fees for financial assistance and other financing information, whether it be related to your pre-K classrooms, subsidy and other programs.

Programs that remain open after April 1st will need to begin to fill out the COVID-19 childcare provider survey. Remember, this is the survey that you report your daily attendance, any vacancy slots you have and also staffing. This will be used for the hotline so that parents will know what childcare is available and you'll be receiving a reminder email beginning tomorrow to remind you to go in and complete this survey daily.

And any program that is not able to continue to meet the requirements that we've outlined in the guidance and that we've gone through this morning, if you can't meet any of those guidelines at any point, please reach out to your childcare consultant and work with them through your issues or if you need to make the decision to close. We just need to be aware of what those decisions are, and your childcare consultant will be there to help and assist you in that process.

To finish my presentation this morning and to wrap up before getting to the questions and answers, I wanted to make sure you were aware of resources.

We've mentioned several of those throughout the presentation. But I also want you to know who you can turn to with your questions. So, who to go to for what? If you have general questions related to the emergency childcare application, please reach out to your childcare consultant.

General questions, your childcare consultant.

If you have specific health questions, need explanations of the health guidance or have health needs, please contact a childcare health consultant. In the guidance that you received on the health guidance that you received previously, there was also an attachment and a link to the childcare health consultants. Please reach out to them they're standing by ready to answer any healthcare questions you may have. And as I mentioned earlier we'll be conducting webinars with our childcare health consultants in the next couple of days that will be able to answer many of the questions that you may have.

If you have subsidy questions, we've talked about the regular subsidized childcare program and we also talked about the new emergency subsidy childcare program. If you have questions related to any of those, you may reach out to the division of child development and early education and ask for the subsidy unit and they should be able to help you and answer any questions you may have.

And finally, if you need additional resources or need help locating resources in your local

communities, we ask that you reach out to your local smart start partnership to help you in troubleshooting.

So I'm going to turn it over to Katie to move us on to the next part of our agenda.

>> Thank you so much Kristi. It's now time to answer your questions. We have been watching the questions come in during this presentation and have compiled a list of the most common questions.

We're going to answer a handful of those now.

If we aren't able to answer your question, please reach out to your childcare consultant.

Additionally, after all of these calls are done we're going to distribute an FAQ document with answers to common questions.

Susan, can you ask our first question, please?

>> >> Thank you.

This is Susan I have questions queued up but I want to start with one question we've gotten from a number of folks.

It's about the executive order and what are considered essential businesses and operations. So, again, this is Executive Order 121. We'll send you the direct link but it is actually on our website in the COVID section right up at the very top. I'm going to read to you from the executive order what the categories of businesses are. They are extensive. So it will be important that if you have questions about it, you look at the rest of the essential workers.

Of course we know childcare is considered one of those essential workers businesses. But in general they fall into these large categories. Health operations. Human services operations. Essential infrastructure operations such as food and beverage production, distribution, fulfillment centers.

Storage facilities.

Construction. Hospital construction. I mean, the list is fairly extensive. Essential government operations.

Stores that sell groceries and medicines, food and beverage production and agriculture and organizations like religious entities and media, gas stations businesses needed for transportation, financial and insurance institutions home improvement, hardware and supplies. Critical trades. Educational institutions. Mail post and shipping services.

So I'm going to stop there but what I'm going to say to you it is a fairly extensive list.

So I would not make any assumptions about what is covered in essential personnel and again as we said it is really important that folks self-identify themselves as being an employee of an essential business.

So, now let me get to some of the other questions. Another question we got was related to what 300% of federal poverty was.

You will find that in the forth coming care application, but just to give you all a sense of that, it is based on family size. And for a family of four, 300% of federal poverty would be about \$78,600. So that just gives you a sense.

You'll get the whole guidelines for all family sizes will be in that parent application.

So moving on to some other questions. Here we go. Some of these are for you, Kristi.

I'll start at the top.

Is there any financial help for those programs that may be forced to close in the middle of the

crisis? I'll take that one as well.

Again, thank you for that question. As we mentioned earlier in this webinar, we are very well aware that childcare businesses choosing to close, and we want you to feel comfortable with making that decision. There are some programs for which choosing to close is going to be the best financial decision, the best health decision.

We really want programs to carefully consider applying to be an emergency childcare provider based on your capacity to meet the health and safety guidelines. So in terms of your question, is there going to be financial help. We know that there will be some financial help.

Absolutely. What we don't yet know is the exact scope and size of that help. Some of that is going to be coming from federal dollars that the state will be receiving specifically for childcare. Some of it will be other disaster dollars that are forthcoming and there will be more guidance on that. That may take a little bit longer than the immediate financial package that will take a little bit longer that we're offering. Okay.

Next question. What is the childcare hotline number. Kristi.

>> The childcare hotline number was in the slides. Let me go back. I will put that slide back up for you so everyone can write that down. Give me one second. It is 1-888-600-1685.
1-888-600-1685.

>> Thank you. Another question for you Kristi.

Can you please define child welfare services?

>> Yes. Those are very specific and the best way to define that is that those children that some of the ones we mentioned, some of the homeless children, if they're in Child Protective Services, if they have foster care, other types of arrangements, that would be a question that you would want to reach out to the subsidy unit on.

If there are particular -- if there's a particular child that you may have a question about. But there are many, many different child welfare services that can be included during this time.

>> Next question. If we are approved to stay open and later decide to close, what steps should we follow? Kristi.

>> Thank you. So the first step you should follow if you are approved to stay open and decide to close is to reach out to your childcare consultant.

Discuss with them the reasoning of why you might want to close, if there are issues or resources that you need, we may be able to help and that would be your first step. Is to reach out to your childcare consultant, making them aware and you need to make the best decision that you can in how you would like to continue or not continue the operation of your center.

>> Thank you. If I open after the 1st of April will my payment be prorated or will I receive payment for the full month? Kristi?

>> If you open after the 1st of April, we are still working through the financial pieces but I would think if you're not in service for the whole month, we would look at those guidelines and it may be prorated, but again there will be further guidance coming out related to payments. So be on the lookout for those.

>> Thank you. Next question. Because of the COVID-19 virus, do you have to fill out an application either way?

Are you saying that no matter when you open you have to fill out an application?

>> During the next two months of April and May, if you plan to operate, you do need to fill out

the emergency childcare application. We need to know who is open. It is to your benefit so that we can refer children.

But we will need you to complete that application and gain approval to continue to operate or if you at a later date decide to reopen to operate. We would need you to fill out that application. Yes.

>> Thank you, Kristi.

The payment guidance for March stated that full payment would be received for all children. Are we supposed to be marking children absent, and if so, should we put sick as the reason for the absence?

>> So I'm not sure if this is related to subsidy or NC pre-K. NC pre-K is sending out additional guidance on how to mark children who may or may not. Some programs may be open. Others may be closed.

There will be further guidance coming out from NC pre-K to address those concerns.

For subsidy, we're asking that you record attendance for the children that are there.

And then even if the children are not there, say they become sick like you mentioned, you will still be held harmless and even if the child is absent, you will receive the full subsidy payment. So we do ask that you record attendance but then please remember that you will be made whole and held harmless.

>> Lots of questions about the bonuses. Do the bonuses only apply to full-time staff?

>> As we discussed in the webinar, the bonuses are for full-time as well as part-time staff.

The amount is reduced in half for your part-time employees and again part-time employees are 20 hours or less. They will receive -- teachers will receive 150 per teacher and staff will receive 100. For full-time employees, it's \$300 for teachers and \$200 for staff.

>> Next question if we consider opening another location to serve more families is this still available and do we need to complete the application again even if we filled it out before April 1st.

Kristi, this is like a licensing issue.

>> Thank you, Susan.

That would be a licensing issue. I would ask that you reach out to your childcare consultant to discuss the steps of opening another facility or another center because that would be a licensing issue and there would be steps that we would need to follow.

>> Next question. Is it mandatory to direct online essential workers to keep their children home. I'll take that one as we mentioned in the webinar, it is really the responsibility of families to self-identify as an employee of an essential business. It's not the responsibility of childcare programs to be policing that. Your responsibility is to make it clear to families that to the extent possible families should be keeping their children home with them unless they are -- unless they are an essential employee of an essential business and then it really is the responsibility of the individual family or parent to self-identify.

Again, though, that is all those essential businesses are in Executive Order 121, but I want to identify that the list is fairly extensive. So I would make sure that you were clear on that. But again it is the responsibility of the family. Our next question, are we to be open our regular hours if we have first and second shifts. Kristi?

>> Thank you, Susan.

That will be up to the individual center. If there's a need to provide those extra shifts the second and third shift I would ask you make that consideration based on what the needs are of your community and the essential workers in your community. But you may operate, those are your own policies, and you may choose how to operate.

>> Okay. If a family is currently using subsidy and they're an essential workers do they need to complete an application for emergency subsidy to receive childcare during April and May?

>> Thank you for that question. No. If the child is on the regular subsidized program, subsidized childcare program, they can continue to receive regular subsidy payments. If the child is a child that is normally enrolled in your facility, there is no change that needs to be made. You still need to record the attendance accordingly and enter that into NCFAS. If this child is coming from another facility but they're enrolled in the subsidized childcare program, then they will have a voucher that the families will need to go to their DSS or contact their DSS, probably work remotely. But they will contact their DSS and get a new voucher for the facility. So to answer your question.

No, if the child is currently being served on the subsidized childcare program they do not need this apply for the emergency subsidy program.

>> Please clarify for putting attendance in for April and May for children that are attending because --

this says aren't attending because of COVID-19 how do we mark them. So just to be clear, you should be recording actual attendance for those children who receive childcare subsidy and for children participating in the emergency childcare program. You should be reporting actual attendance.

>> That is correct.

Thanks, Susan.

>> So you should not be recording absences, just actual attendance.

Okay. There are a few health questions that we will cover when we do the health calls, with the health consultants.

So are day cares required to take the essential children if they do remain open.

I'll take that one.

Again, we are not requiring childcare programs to choose to stay open to enroll new children of essential workers if they choose not to. However, we are strongly encouraging you to do so because we want to make sure that our essential workers have safe childcare for their children during this period. But we are not requiring that. So, if you're a childcare program you'll be serving the children of some essential personnel you just want to stick with those children, you may choose to do that.

Okay. If the provider knows that the parent is not employed, can they ask parents not to bring children? I'll take that one. Again, I think each individual childcare program has to make decisions about how they manage their relationships with the families enrolled in their childcare programs. So you know your relationships. You know your families. If you feel like that's a conversation that you want to have or feel comfortable having or need to have, that is something that you can certainly choose to do.

Let's see. Are current families eligible for the new vouchers if they qualify? Kristi.

>> If we're speaking about the emergency childcare subsidy program, yes, new families would

be available. If we're talking about the traditional subsidized childcare program, those children, if you wanted to -- they would need --

the families would need to contact DSS and apply as normal. But all children that meet those criteria, the three that we identified, the 300 percent of poverty level, if there's no other childcare available, they have no other childcare available and the family and the parent is an essential worker, they would be eligible for the emergency subsidy childcare program.

>> Thank you. Will the bonuses that centers are to receive for staff -- okay. For centers that have had to cut staff will the bonuses be for everyone employed or only for those that are working? Kristi.

>> In our guidance, we have said that the bonuses are for those that are on site and working.

>> Thank you. How is the bonus pay dispersed?

Is it monthly with the voucher payment?

Kristi.

>> Yes, as I've mentioned before, we are still working through all of the financial procedures and policies of how these will be paid out, but it will be paid on a monthly basis, along with the subsidy programs or NC pre-K payments. So, we'll be providing further guidance and detail in the next few days regarding payments. But they will be paid on a monthly basis.

>> Are administrators considered staff for the purposes of the bonuses, Kristi?

>> Yes, administrators are considered staff for purposes of the bonus payments.

>> Okay. If you aren't currently licensed for school-age, are you able to serve school-aged children during this crisis?

>> Great question. If you are not currently licensed for school-aged care, you are not able to serve school-aged children during this crisis. There are other arrangements, we're working with our public school partners and other community partners where school-aged care may be available. I would ask if you have a concern to reach out to your licensing childcare consultant and they will be able to provide more guidance.

>> Okay. Is it okay to enroll new children on a limited basis with an understanding that currently enrolled children will be returning? Kristi?

>> Yes, it is appropriate to temporarily enroll new children with the understanding that your other children, once the crisis is over, may return.

>> Okay. Another question. If we open in April or May, should we open up to our regular children that we provide care to who are not essential workers or should we just open to essential workers and save those other spaces for essential workers' children. I'll take that one. So, again, folks, we are operating in a public health emergency. The emergency childcare that you are providing should be for the employees of essential workers. We are also operating under an executive order mandating stay at home, which means that folks should not be out and about unless they are doing essential business or they are doing something personally that is considered essential. Going to the grocery store, exercising. So as I said at the opening of this -- and I can't emphasize enough that during this period, for the fullest extent possible we need our community -- we are in this together. We need people to practice social distancing. We need people to stay at home and keep their children home with them if they can so that for the folks who are in essential businesses or do need to use childcare we are able to limit that, those group sizes.

We are able to ensure the health and safety standards are being met.

So the answer to your question is right now your programs should not be open to the families that you typically enroll unless they are employees of essential businesses. Okay.

Let's see. Okay. Will centers that do not receive voucher payments still receive staff bonuses?

Kristi?

>> Yes, you are still eligible for staff bonuses even if you do not take voucher payments for subsidized children.

>> Similar question, will the bonuses be paid for GS 110 facilities that are open?

>> Yes, if you elect to receive bonus payments for your facility, yes, they will be paid to GS 110, any regulated or licensed facility is eligible for the bonus payments.

>> Thank you. Will licensing consultants visit the providers that are open to ensure they are following the new guidelines? Kristi?

>> Thank you for that question. At the present time, that was one of the regulatory flexibilities in the guidance that was issued. We will not be making regular visits to childcare facilities to do any type of monitoring. At this point in time we are there as helpers and as consultants to answer questions and to assist you in any way possible.

>> Okay. If a child has a fever with additional siblings and the parent insists on bringing the children, what options are available to childcare facilities on denying care? Again, we're going to go over all of the health and safety protocols at length in upcoming webinars with our child healthcare consultants but we are recommending certain screening and exclusion practices. We're not recommending -- we are requiring you to follow them. And that means that those kinds of conversations, if you have a child who presents with a fever, that child should not be attending your childcare facility. So again the specifics on that guidance will be gone over in the health and safety webinars that are forth coming but we want to make sure that you're very clear on those protocols and those are conversations that will need to happen with your families that are or families enrolling in your program. That's why we've provided you with a sign posting saying just so you know this is the criteria we're going to be using now as you're walking in the door, be aware.

>> Susan, may I just add to that? What I was going to say is that information is outlined specifically in the health guidance that they've received. And if they have questions, until we get the webinars scheduled, I would ask them to reach out to their childcare health consultant who can provide the appropriate guidance.

>> Thank you, Kristi.

If we are being paid in April and May for the amount of children we have in February, will any new children we add still be paid at the end of the month as well, February being a baseline payment, question mark? Kristi.

>> Thank you for that question. We are going to make you whole for February for the month of April and May in case your enrollment is lower, but if you have new children that have enrolled under the emergency childcare subsidy program, that will be an additional payment on top of the payment that you received, your regular subsidy payment. That will be an additional payment on top of it, yes.

>> Okay. We were told in an email from DCDE on the 18th to mark all children in March as present and if they came in one day, is that no longer what we should, do we should put in their

actual attendance we'll be paid regardless?

Yes this is a shift to the way we're approaching payment.

Kristi I'll ask you to explain it but it's a good question because we're giving them a change in guidance from how we handled March.

>> That's correct.

Thank you, Susan. For March, you are absolutely correct you mark all children present for the month of March. April and May the guidance is shifting as to how to enter children that are in subsidy within the system. We ask you to enter actual attendance.

I know Elizabeth Everett with our subsidy unit is in the preparation of a dear county letter as well as a letter, email to the providers to explain exactly how to handle attendance for April and May. So please be on the lookout for that communication and it is a shift.

March was to mark all present but April and May will be different.

Please be on the lookout for further guidance.

>> Thank you, Kristi.

What if I don't have any emergency children during the month of April? Are we to remain open and who pays for staff? So I'll take that one. So, no, you do not need to remain open. And in fact it is probably wise that programs that don't have any enrollment at all at this time consider whether or not closing is a good option for them. You also need to think about the health and safety of you and your staff. So we're again not requiring programs to stay open at this time. But for programs who do wish to stay open at any point want to reopen do need to complete the emergency childcare application. So to be clear, all children that will be attending should fill out the emergency funding form. And the answer to that is no.

So the emergency childcare financial assistance form for parents are for families who need financial assistance paying for care and are not currently receiving childcare subsidy and they have to meet certain criteria. They have to be under 300 percent of poverty which is identified on the form what the amounts are. They have to identify that they have no other childcare options available to them. So there are criteria that they will have to self-attest to in order to be eligible for the financial assistance.

If you have other children in your care who are private pay and they are the children of an employee of an essential business, they do not need to fill out that form. What clarification has been provided to media networks about childcare during COVID-19? Local news stations seem to be putting out incorrect information. I will take that. So we have at the state emergency operations center something called the joint information center, which is a unified centralized public information center with folks from emergency management, health and human services, across the departments. And it is up to that joint information center to get out good information to the media about what is happening with childcare. We are doing our absolute best to field all media questions and make sure they have accurate and timely information about childcare and about COVID-19 in general.

If you have identified media that seems to have incorrect information, feel free to share that with us and we will follow up. How do we report number of staff that we have to get an accurate bonus amount?

Kristi.

>> Thank you for that question. Currently that is included on the childcare provider survey. We

are working to update that survey on how to better and more accurately record the number of staff. But that will be recorded in the childcare provider survey.

>> Thank you, Kristi.

If we receive the staff bonus along with the voucher payments the school has to pay income tax on that and will no longer be the total amount provided. That may be the only way to do it but it does reduce the end value of the bonus. I'll take that one. Yes, that is correct. We looked at other potential ways to provide bonuses which wouldn't require the collection of income tax and we were unable to identify one that was workable and okay to do.

So it is considered income and the \$300 and \$200 will be, taxes they will be subject to taxes.

Would you please repeat the criteria if you have a child that will be privately paying, how would this look. Kristi, I'll let you take that one.

>> Sure. If you have an essential worker and they have a child who needs care and they're paying privately, they're a private pay parent, then the only criteria would be that the child is the child of an essential worker.

>> Thank you Kristi is there an alternate number for the application it's showing an error message when I try to complete it.

>> Please reach out to your childcare consultant and we will double-check that link to make sure there's not an issue.

>> Question again about bonuses.

>> Can I add one more thing before you go on, Susan. I'm sorry. One thing I will note is with the new application there's been an update to the childcare, emergency childcare provider application, and there is a link within the form itself that is a step-by-step guidance of how to complete the application. So that is another resource for providers. I apologize for interrupting.

>> No problem. Next question, Kristi, bonuses are based off of February. What of part timers working less than 20 hours before COVID-19 are now working 25, do they still qualify? I think you need to clarify that, Kristi.

>> So if a childcare provider is on site and currently working during the months of April and May, those are the ones that qualify for the bonuses. And again full-time and then 20 hours or less is considered part-time.

>> Thank you Kristi the answer is no bonuses are not for February they are bonuses for individual, for childcare staff that are working in April and May.

>> I appreciate that clarification. I did not hear the February part.

>> Okay. So private paying parents that are essential can fill out the application to pay to help with payment?

Kristi.

>> Childcare providers -- read the question again, Susan, I didn't hear the first part.

>> Parents, if they're currently enrolled be available for financial assistance, can they apply?

>> Yes, if a parent that is currently enrolled and they meet the criteria, they're an essential worker, they're below the federal, 300 percent of poverty level and they have no other option for childcare, they can apply for the emergency childcare assistance program.

>> Great. If your program is closed but you are working remotely from home to provide educational learning to children and families with daily document, would that be considered as part of attendance of the center or would they have to be open to receive funding?

So we are issuing separate guidance just for NC pre-K providers on the kinds of things that they should be doing with the children and families remotely.

But for all other childcare you do have to be physically open to have access to the funding that is available. Okay. Where might one find the signs to post. I think they're talking about the health and safety signs. Kristi.

>> Yes, if you will go to the DHH website and under the childcare box all the guidance we've issued is available there. It is also available on our DCDEE website under the COVID-19 bar. And if you still cannot find it, please reach out to your childcare consultant and they'll be able to supply that for you.

>> Okay. Another question. Will nurses get a bonus if they're on site for the total time?

>> If the nurses are part of the staff of the center, I would think they would be eligible for the bonus. Yes.

>> Okay. How does the division plan to assist in providing supplies needed by childcare programs?

>> If you have need for supplies or other resources we ask that you call your local smart start partnership first. Hopefully they will be able to work with you locally within your community to help you find or assist you in finding those supplies and resources.

And they are in touch with us if there are issues related to that but please contact your local smart start partnership. They will help in the finding and referring you to where you may be able to find those supplies and resources.

>> I'm scrolling through the questions, I think we've answered most of the kinds of questions we're seeing so far but let me just take a quick look. We serve a population of families who are able to stay at home with their children with the exception of two or three. If we were interested in reopening enrolling only essential workers, who could we partner with? Kristi.

>> So, again, it is up to the individual families to identify themselves, and it sounds like that you have identified that many of your families may not be essential workers but again that is up to the families to self-identify. If you would like to open and I believe I heard you were interested in who may you partner with? Was that the question?

>> I think the question was -- I think the question is the program is looking to identify families who may be in need of childcare who are essential personnel. So the best way that we are connecting families to childcare programs is through the 800 number.

And if your program chooses to open, then we will certainly connect families who are calling to your program if it meets their criteria and where they need to be working. If you're a childcare program that is in a local community and you're thinking reopening and you know of an essential business nearby where you think there might be employees who may need childcare you absolutely, any childcare business, can reach out to local industry to see if they have a need and if they would be interested in purchasing spots or even their human resources person would want to work with you. So I think some of that can certainly happen at the local level but from the state level the way that we are connecting families to available childcare options is through the 800 number.

So I think, Kristi, that we have covered most of the kinds of questions.

I'm just going to take one more minute here to scroll through to see if we have any other -- okay. If you do the survey in the morning hours and put that staff number down in the

afternoon and you have a different number of staff at work, will we need to put down the entire amount of staff for the day when you do the survey? Kristi.

>> Yes. Thank you for that question. The reminder email that we're sending out is asking you to complete it at the end, by the end of the day. So you can choose when you would complete it, but I would think you would want to be inclusive of the staff for the full day. So if you have different staff in the afternoon, I would think you would want to at least make sure that all of that is included in the report that you submit for that day.

>> Okay. Here's another one. For employees who decide to get unemployment but our center is still open for emergency children, do we have to hold their jobs? Folks, I'll just say there are many --

you aren't in -- you are in many ways independent private businesses and while we do have state regulatory authority, those kind of employment decisions are decisions that you would need to make. But I would offer to you that we want to be thoughtful about folks who are making the decision not to be in, for example, a childcare setting or another congregate setting. People need to self-identify and take precautions for themselves and maybe individuals who are in one way, shape or form feel at risk because they're part of an at risk population. So those are the kinds of decisions, those decisions are as always individual childcare programs need to make and we trust that you will make good decisions that are in the best interests of the children that you care for and of your employees. Let's see if NC pre-K teachers have instruction or requirements to meet can they be required to work in other classrooms?

Would it be double dipping for the teacher to get paid through NC pre-K funds and the bonus funds made available? Kristi.

>> So NC pre-K teachers are employees of your center and they may be utilized in any way you need to utilize them. There will be additional guidance coming out with specific requirements such as NC pre-K teachers will need to conduct. But NC pre-K teachers are also eligible for the bonus payment if they're on site and working.

>> Great. Thanks, Kristi. We currently get paid at a blended rate for school agers, will this change?

Kristi.

>> That is a policy discussion that we are having and there will be additional guidance coming out related to the blended rate. That is the discussion that is currently being reviewed and there will be further guidance related to that. But thank you for that question. Please be on the lookout for further guidance.

>> Okay. I'm going to answer this one last question again and then I think we're going to close out. I'm trying to get clarity. Can we keep our current children that may not fall under the listed categories that are currently enrolled or will we have to accept new children of essential workers? I'm going to try to provide clarity one more time.

So at this time we are approving childcare programs to open under the emergency childcare guidelines to serve the children of essential personnel as defined in Executive Order 121.

And as I mentioned that list is fairly long of who is considered essential personnel.

The expectation is that all of us together are following the stay-at-home order, which is this say if we are not part of the workforce of essential personnel we are doing all the things the stay-at-home order are asking us to maintain social distancing, to stay at home, to keep our children at

home with us, to go out only for essential business that we need to provide.

So our guidance to you is that the children in your care should be the children of essential personnel. They can be the children currently enrolled in your program that are children of essential personnel or they can be new children that you are enrolling of essential personnel because you have vacancies. You do not have to choose to enroll new children if you do not wish to. But again we're trying to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus in our communities and we are asking everyone to cooperate. We know childcare is essential for some families. We're asking that childcare to be provided to employees of essentially personnel or children who are homeless or in the child welfare system or are in some sort of category they're in unstable housing. Other than that we're asking folks please have their children home with them so we can combat the spread of COVID-19. I hope that's clear.

Happy to continue to try to answer that question but we have put out guidance in writing.

Okay. With that, I think I'm going to turn it back over to Katie to close this out and talk about next steps for folks in terms of how they'll have access to this PowerPoint and answers to the questions. Katie.

>> Great. Thank you so much, Susan and Kristi, that was really helpful. As a reminder, this presentation has been recorded and will be posted on the health and human services website in case you would like to refer back or share this with others. We will also be distributing a frequently asked questions document with the answers to your common questions. As we wrap up, we want to say thank you again to all of the childcare professionals who joined us today. We thank you for your service.

Please stay safe and be well. buting a Please stay safe and be well. well.